Bring Your Own Bag Ordinance

Environmental Services
Office of Environmental Policy and Sustainability

Study Session
May 10, 2016
ITEM #2
Overview

- Tacoma uses ~70 – 100 million disposable plastic bags per year
- Disposable bag impacts
- Public input and community engagement
- Draft ordinance and implementation plans
  - Amended per IPS on April 27th
    - Modified implementation plan to include focused outreach to low income and communities of color
    - Added follow up study to assess impacts of BYOB ordinance on low income and communities of color
Timeline

March 2012
STC Priority

July 2014
IPS Presentation

Nov 2013
IPS Presentation

December 2014
IPS Engagement

May 2014
Resolution #38907

Jan 2015
IPS Engagement

Feb 2016
IPS Presentation

Mar 2015 - Jan 2016
Bag Surveys

Jan 2016
IPS Engagement

April 2016
Chamber Presentation

April 2016
IPS Engagement

March 2016
Public Forum
Single-Use Plastic Carryout Bag
Local Issues

- Impacts to solid waste system
  - 2015 Tacoma waste
    - 534 tons or 0.3% by weight
    - $30,000/year disposal costs to ratepayers
  - Washington State Department of Ecology report estimates $700-$1000 a ton for recycling centers to remove plastic films from other recyclables

- Litter

- Wildlife
Single-Use Carryout Bag Issues

- Life Cycle Analysis: studies not definitive on best choice, but show clear trends
  - Reusable: woven plastic bags seem best
  - Plastic: worse for litter, better for resource and energy use
  - Paper: even recycled, is worse for resource use, energy use, and greenhouse gas emissions
Limiting Single-Use Carryout Bags

- Fee on paper and plastic
- Fee on plastic only
- Ban plastic (paper unrestricted)
- Outreach and education
Variety of Bag Restrictions

- Ban Plastic, Fee Paper and Reusables $0.25: 15
- Ban Plastic, Fee Paper and Reusables $0.05-$0.10: 15
- Ban Plastic, Fee Paper $0.20-$0.25: 12
- Ban Plastic, Fee Paper $0.10: 94
- Ban Plastic, Fee Paper $0.05: 19
- Fee Plastic and Paper $0.05-$0.10: 7
- Ban Plastic, No Fee Paper: 59

Estimated Number
Outreach to Date

- Webpage
- Press releases
- TV Tacoma
- Social media (Facebook and Twitter)
- Flyer to food banks
- Email Listservs
- Media: print, TV, radio

- Bag Forum (3/29)
- Chamber presentation (4/8)
- Washington jurisdictions’ advice
- Neighborhood and Business District meetings
Online Feedback Surveys

- **November 23, 2015 – January 15, 2016**
- **Public Survey**
  - 2,188 responses; 1,008 comments
  - 55% want Council action
- **Business Survey**
  - 84 responses; 1,250 letters mailed to retailers
  - 71% did not want Council action
Input Summary

- March Forum written and oral comments:
  - 23 favor; 24 oppose; 1 neutral

- Other jurisdictions:
  - Generally positive feedback – residents and business
  - No increase in shoplifting with reusable bags
  - No health issues related to reusable bags
  - Consider closing loophole to prevent retailers converting to thicker bags
  - Fee may need to be increased to remain effective
Bring Your Own Bag Ordinance

- Intended to encourage people to bring their own carryout bags, NOT to pay pass-through charge
  - Results from other communities show it works
  - Direct and indirect social, economic and environmental costs
    - “Free” bags are not free
  - Businesses will directly recover bag costs
Bellingham Model

- This model is used in 12 of 14 laws in Washington.

- Supported by Northwest Grocery Association (NWGA) whose membership includes Safeway, Albertsons, Costco Wholesale, QFC, Fred Meyer.

- NWGA supports plastic bag bans with 3 criteria:
  - Applies to ALL retailers
  - Requires fee for paper bags, kept by retailer
  - Includes all bags, paper and plastic
Bring Your Own Bag Ordinance

- Retailers cannot provide single-use plastic carryout bags (film plastic <2.25 mils)
- Retailers may provide paper and/or reusable carryout bags for a $0.05 (minimum) pass-through charge that they keep
  - WIC, TANF, SNAP, FAP don’t pay pass-through charge
- 6 month phase-in period
  - Retailers given time to use stock of bags and adjust Point of Sale systems
Ordinance Definitions

“Carryout bag”: any bag provided by retailer at the point of sale for use to transport purchases away from premises

- Does not include: bags for bulk items, produce, damp items such as flowers, and prescription pharmacy, newspaper, laundry-dry cleaning, tires, and food take-out bags
Ordinance Definitions

“Recycled paper carryout bag”:
- One-eighth barrel or larger must contain an average of 40% postconsumer recycled material
- Eight-pound or smaller must contain a minimum of 20% postconsumer recycled material

“Reusable carryout bag”: made for long term multiple reuse, with handles, can be cleaned or disinfected, and thicker than 2.25 mils if made of film plastic
Ordinance Definitions

- **“Retail establishment”**: any corporation, partnership, business venture, sports or entertainment facility, government agency, vendor or other organization that provides goods
  - Includes: Department stores, grocery stores, convenience stores, gas stations, restaurants, farmers market, etc.
  - Does not include: Food banks and other food assistance programs
Bring Your Own Carryout Bag Ordinance

Not allowed

OK

$0.05 min

All other retail provided carryout bags
$0.05 min
## Implementation

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Implementation

- Give away reusable carryout bags:
  - City to investigate sponsorship opportunities
  - Provide bags to:
    - Food Banks
    - WIC, TANF, SNAP, FAP
    - Community events
    - Tacoma FIRST 311
  - Share-a-Bag Exchange
    - Libraries
    - Community Centers

Focus on low income and communities of color
Equity and Fairness

- “Free” bags are subsidized by all shoppers
  - Everyone pays for free carryout bags through higher prices on products, even if you BYOB
    - ~ $37.50 per person per year

- BYOB Ordinance
  - People pay directly for bags; not via hidden costs
  - Should lower shopping bill overall, especially if BYOB
  - Lowest income shoppers do not pay fee
  - Implementation plan will focus on helping shoppers avoid paying pass-through charge
# Implementation

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Presentations to include ordinance language, allowable bags, training materials and outreach and education materials for employees and customers
Alternatives to disposable shopping bags

- Dog and cat waste
  - Reuse produce or bread bags
  - Specific dog waste bags
    Example: 2000/$39 = $.02/each

- Garbage can liners
  - No liner
  - Liners
    Example: 1000/$29 = $.03/each
Evaluation

- 12-18 months after effective date: evaluate impacts on shoppers, retailers, and the environment
- Emphasis on low income and communities of color shoppers
Survey Summary:
- 53% residents support law, 30% have no feeling, 16% bothered
- Businesses personally supportive of law by large margin
- 69% business owners saw no negative impact on their business
- Significant reduction in disposable bag use
- Much less plastic bag litter
- 50% business saving money, only 1 in 4 any negative impacts
Fiscal Impact

- Estimated at $50,000
  - Solid Waste 4200 fund in 2017-18 biennium
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